

Mollie Richter

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Canton CT

House Bill 6380

Hello, my name is Mollie Richter and I am a 13-year-old eighth grader at Canton Middle School in Canton Connecticut. I was born with the condition known as Albinism, which is where you have low-vision and are considered "legally blind." Because of this I have trouble with things like reading the board in class and I will most likely not be able to drive a car when it is time to get my license.

I am representing the Student Advisory Council for the Board and Education and Services for the blind. The Student Advisory Council as you may know is a group made up of visually impaired students across the state of Connecticut. In the Student Advisory Council kids with visual impairments get the chance to teach people about their disability and learn more about it themselves. So why would the state want to disband such a thing?

I am strictly opposed to the House Bill 6380. If the state disbands the BESB agency it then it will completely change every student living in the state with a visual impairments life. How can you, after 118 years of existence decide to change around a whole

lifestyle because it will be more efficient for you, well let me tell you that you just can't?

The state of Connecticut may think that they are saving money by combining BESB with other agencies but it is doing just the opposite. By putting the decision whether to get a Braille specialist in the hands of each town, the state is letting towns spend more money on a Braille specialist for one student rather than supplying a few for every region and where they are needed. This is why the state is not saving money by combining BESB with other agencies.

There are also many issues regarding if the SDE has the facilities that will be required to house all of the programs and equipment for the Visually impaired students. There will need to be people to take care of and stock the current Braille library containing 60,000 volumes. Will the SDE be able to make space for the current 43 children's service staff, student programs, and in-service training for district personnel? Tell me where is the money that's going to build all of these facilities to house these programs? This is why the SDE will be faced with problems regarding all of the facilities required to house all of the programs and equipment.

Also the SDE agency is not equipped with the training or knowledge on how to teach or help students with visual impairments. Going into school, students with visual impairments will now be faced with the struggle of having someone, who is incompetent to their likes or needs. People in the SDE have not had any managerial knowledge or expertise in Blindness, this is like asking a dentist to give a person a shot, sure their both doctors but they are different kind of doctors, it just doesn't work. This is why the SDE agency is not equipped with the training or knowledge on how to teach or help students with visual impairments,

To summarize my testimony I would like to go over what I have just explained to you. If the state combines BESB with SDE then there will be many issues. The state will lose money instead of gaining it, the state will have issues getting the proper facilities needed to conduct the agency, and SDE is not equipped with the training or knowledge needed to teach or help students with visual impairments.

I have been with BESB since I was about three months old and they have stuck by me through tremendous loss and gain. If you turn this agency over to the SDE, you are not only hurting BESB, but also

you are hurting all of the families in Connecticut who have children with Visual impairments. I would like to thank the committee for letting me speak and I hope that you decide on the correct verdict. Thank You